

National History Day Celebrates Educators and Students Researching Untold Stories of U.S. Marine Corps Veterans from World War II

COLLEGE PARK, MD – July 1, 2026 – In honor of the 250th anniversaries of the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Marine Corps, [National History Day](http://nhd.org)® (NHD) is proud to celebrate the educators who completed its newest Silent Heroes™ program, *Untold Stories from the U.S. Marine Corps in World War II*, sponsored by a grant from the [Veterans Legacy Program](#) at the [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs](#). 48 educators partnered with their students to research the lives of over 100 Veterans who served during World War II, continued to serve their community after returning home, and are currently buried or memorialized in a U.S. national or state Veterans cemetery.

From August 2025 through April 2026, educators met with both a historian and research mentors to study the history of the Marine Corps, World War II, and the experiences of Veterans who returned to their communities, while conducting primary-source research on their Veterans’ lives. The student-teacher teams then synthesized the information to tell the story of their Veteran’s life and service with a profile published on the [Veterans Legacy Memorial](#) and NHD’s [Silent Heroes website](#).

“While fostering historical research and primary source analysis skills, *Silent Heroes* simultaneously allows educators and students to connect with and share the heroic untold stories of their local community members,” says NHD Executive Director, Dr. Cathy Gorn. “We’re grateful for the Veterans Legacy Program, the National Cemetery Administration, and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs for their support in furthering access to the history of U.S. Veterans.”

After researching their chosen Veterans’ lives, military service, and contributions to their communities last fall, student-teacher teams visited their local national cemetery in spring 2026 to honor their Veterans and read eulogies at their graves. In addition to the digital profiles, NHD produced [video eulogies](#) for the Veterans.

The educators selected for this program represent 31 states and 42 U.S. national or state cemeteries. NHD celebrates the following educators participating in this program and the Veterans they selected to research:

Teacher and School	U.S. Marine Corps Veterans	Cemetery
Ms. Callie Outlaw Tuscaloosa Academy Tuscaloosa, AL	U.S. Navy Pharmacist’s Mate Second Class Corpsman Hubert Albert Awtrey (U.S. Marine Corps Corpsman) Corporal Addie Belle Raybon Bozeman	Alabama National Cemetery Montevallo, AL

<p>Dr. Rebekah West Keur Gary K. Herberger Young Scholars Academy Phoenix, AZ</p>	<p>Sergeant Major Elmo Arthur Burns Gunnery Sergeant Charles Frankel Corporal Ruth Rosalie Horenstein Staff Sergeant Janet Ann Pearson Stoeberl</p>	<p>National Memorial Cemetery of Arizona Phoenix, AZ</p>
<p>Mrs. Katy Wellborn Pulaski Academy Little Rock, AR</p>	<p>Private Louis Ferdinand Brown Captain John Howard Yancey</p>	<p>Little Rock National Cemetery Little Rock, AR</p>
<p>Ms. Aditi Mehta Doshi Van Nuys High School Van Nuys, CA</p>	<p>Corporal Ivan Caldwell Cannady Sergeant Frances Helen Pyeatt Salyer</p>	<p>Los Angeles National Cemetery Los Angeles, CA</p>
<p>Ms. Emily Green POLYTECH School District Woodside, DE</p>	<p>Corporal Albert John Homiak Corporal Robert Ezra Williams</p>	<p>Delaware Veterans Memorial Cemetery – New Castle County Bear, DE Delaware Veterans Memorial Cemetery Millsboro, DE</p>
<p>Mr. Alex Hujik Lake Highland Preparatory School Orlando, FL</p>	<p>Staff Sergeant Thomas Joseph Pechacek Sergeant Isom “Ike” Alto Rigell</p>	<p>Cape Canaveral National Cemetery Mims, FL</p>
<p>Mrs. Mercedes Cortes City of Pembroke Pines Charter School Middle- West Campus Pembroke Pines, FL</p>	<p>Staff Sergeant Joseph Gulya Corporal Samuel Harold Oser</p>	<p>South Florida National Cemetery Wellington, FL</p>
<p>Ms. April Balenger Arts Innovation Magnet Program Winder, GA</p>	<p>Corporal Inez Riley Moss Sergeant August Joseph Tramonte</p>	<p>Georgia National Cemetery Canton, GA</p>

<p>Ms. Arminda Lawrence, Sr. Pace Academy Atlanta, GA</p>	<p>Gunnery Sergeant Warren C. Armstrong</p> <p>Private First Class Miles Robert Donaldson</p> <p>Master Sergeant John T. Kesler</p> <p>Master Gunnery Sergeant Richard R. Neumann</p>	<p>Marietta National Cemetery Marietta, GA</p>
<p>Ms. Pualeilani Fernandez Hilo Intermediate School Hilo, HI</p>	<p>Chief Warrant Officer Second Class George David Durham</p> <p>Private Robert Edward Lemmon</p>	<p>East Hawaii State Veterans Cemetery Hilo, HI</p>
<p>Ms. Janyce Omura Maui High School Kahului, HI</p>	<p>Major Jay "Jason" Leonard Anthony Lembeck</p> <p>Lieutenant Colonel Russell "Whitey" Lloyd</p>	<p>Maui Veterans Cemetery Makawao, HI</p>
<p>Mr. Adam Mastalski Compass Honors High School Meridian, ID</p>	<p>Private First Class Ivan Emery Fleming</p> <p>Sergeant Joseph "Joe" Stinson McElhinney, Jr.</p>	<p>Idaho State Veterans Cemetery Boise, ID</p>
<p>Mrs. Kristin Rentschler Columbia City High School Columbia City, IN</p>	<p>Lieutenant Colonel Russell John McCurdy</p> <p>Private William Alfred Yates, Jr.</p>	<p>Marion National Cemetery Marion, IN</p>
<p>Mr. Jonathan Markus Adel DeSoto Minburn Middle School Adel, IA</p>	<p>Major Merton Peter "Mert" Hansen</p> <p>Private First Class James William "Jim" McLeran</p>	<p>Iowa Veterans Cemetery Adel, IA</p>
<p>Ms. Cheryl Smith</p>	<p>Sergeant George Elias Addison</p>	<p>Iowa Veterans Cemetery</p>

Johnston High School Johnston Middle School Johnston, IA	Private First Class Raymond Norbert Dikes First Lieutenant Robert Daniel Gaskill	Adel, IA
Mrs. Laura Craig Bethlehem High School Bardstown, KY	Private Elmer Lee Arnold Corporal James Beaven Miles	Lebanon National Cemetery Lebanon, KY
Mr. Paul Manuel Valdezco Glasgow Middle School Baton Rouge, LA	Private Johnie Ervin Branch, Jr. Sergeant George Sylvester Greeneberg	Baton Rouge National Cemetery Baton Rouge, LA
Mrs. Amie Dryer The Calverton School Huntingtown, MD	Private Paul F. W. Hummel Corporal Ruth Daria Franz Hummel Colonel John Nevin Rentz	Baltimore National Cemetery Baltimore, MD
Mrs. Jennifer Harris Salisbury Christian School Salisbury, MD	Corporal Joseph Elia Camardese, Sr. Private First Class Vaughn Brown Russell	Delaware Veterans Memorial Cemetery – Sussex County Millsboro, DE
Mr. Michael Hill St. Mary's Lynn Lynn, MA	Corporal Keith Albert Krewson Colonel Ernestine Stowell	Massachusetts National Cemetery Bourne, MA
Mrs. Chelsea Blair Our Lady of Refuge School West Bloomfield Township, MI	Corporal Herman Harold Schneider Master Sergeant David Splatt	Great Lakes National Cemetery Holly, MI
Mrs. Elizabeth Green College and Career Technical Institute Pascagoula, MS	Major Robert Hill McCormick Staff Sergeant Marguerite H. Ross	Biloxi National Cemetery Biloxi, MS

Mrs. Taylor Olsen Harlowton High School Harlowton, MT	Sergeant Edward William "Bill" Knebel Corporal Walter S. Pfister	Yellowstone National Cemetery Laurel, MT
Mrs. Megan Philbrook Andover Elementary/Middle School Andover, NH	Corporal Rudolph Eugene Miniutti Corporal Reginald Guy Walker, Jr.	New Hampshire State Veterans Cemetery, Boscawen, NH
Mr. Bryan Melnick Simon Baruch Middle School New York, NY	Corporal William C. Arnold Lieutenant Colonel Francis Joseph Nelligan	Cypress Hills National Cemetery Brooklyn, NY
Mrs. Karen Schmitt Stimson Middle School Huntington Station, NY	Sergeant James F. McEney Sergeant Laurence Edward Morva	Long Island National Cemetery Farmingdale, NY
Mr. Patrick Sprinkle New York City Lab School for Collaborative Studies New York, NY	Corporal Peter Humberto Fabregas Corporal Gerard Francis Jansen	Long Island National Cemetery Farmingdale, NY
Ms. Whitney Cooper Valley Springs Middle School Arden, NC	Major Thomas Fulton Savage, Jr. Steward First Class Alfred Jetter Whitesides, Sr.	Western Carolina State Veterans Cemetery Black Mountain, NC
Ms. Patricia Robblee Lejeune High School Camp Lejeune, NC	Master Sergeant Turner Grady Blount Gunnery Sergeant Wallace Alfred Boudrow	Coastal Carolina State Veterans Cemetery Jacksonville, NC
Mr. Wesley Young Camden County High School Camden, NC	Corporal LeRoy "Shorty" Willie Cason Corporal Robert Elmo Nichols, Sr.	Albert G. Horton, Jr. Memorial Veterans Cemetery Suffolk, VA
Dr. Christa Adams	Corporal Paul English Dzeiak	Ohio Western Reserve National

Bard Early College Cleveland Cleveland, OH	Master Technical Sergeant Germain Joseph "Jerry" Suminski	Cemetery Rittman, OH
Mrs. Brenda Unsinger Geneva High School Geneva, OH	Master Sergeant William Milton Pitts Corporal Martha Mary Rayne Weyrick	Ohio Western Reserve National Cemetery Rittman, OH
Mrs. Stefanie Spivey Heppner Junior/Senior High School Heppner, OR	Sergeant Andy Nyal Campbell Colonel Kenneth Lyle Reusser	Willamette National Cemetery Portland, OR
Mr. Brian Weaver Central Bucks High School – West Doylestown, PA	Corporal Edward Joseph Dymek Major Samuel Lynn Hynes	Washington Crossing National Cemetery Washington Crossing, PA
Mrs. Kim Guthrie Palmetto Christian Academy Gaffney Gaffney, SC	Private First Class Richard Eugene Irvin Sergeant Louis Roy Sanchez	M.J. "Dolly" Cooper Veterans Cemetery Anderson, SC
Mrs. Sue Larson Rapid City Christian School Rapid City, SD	Master Sergeant Thomas John Abourezk Corporal Benny James Gross	Black Hills National Cemetery Sturgis, SD
Dr. Andrew Fultz L&N STEM Academy Knoxville, TN	Corporal George Edward Price Staff Sergeant Carl Burton Taylor	Eastern TN State Veterans Cemetery – Governor John Sevier Highway Knoxville, TN
Mrs. Whitney Joyner Kirkwood Middle School Clarksville, TN	Corporal William Pennington Hornsby Sergeant Francis Dubose Moore	Nashville National Cemetery Nashville, TN
Mrs. Vannessa Guerra	Technical Sergeant Eugene E.	Houston National Cemetery

<p>Dr. Archie Blanson Career and Technical Education High School Houston, TX</p>	<p>Pendergast</p> <p>Sergeant Maria Consuelo “Connie” Espinosa Pendergast</p> <p>Private First Class Arthur Espinoza Rodriquez, Sr.</p>	<p>Houston, TX</p>
<p>Mrs. Heather McCormick, Mrs. Judy Garza, and Mr. Kelly Moore Snyder Junior High School Snyder, TX</p>	<p>Sergeant Robert Edward Arnold</p> <p>Corporal Otto Byrns (O.B.) Freeman, Jr.</p> <p>Captain Gordon Harris Gray</p> <p>Corporal Benjamin Frank Schwartz</p> <p>Corporal James “Coach” Stanley Suba</p> <p>Corporal William Merritt Zinn</p>	<p>Texas State Veterans Cemetery at Abilene Abilene, TX</p>
<p>Mrs. Michele Santosuosso St. Mark’s School of Texas Dallas, TX</p>	<p>Technical Staff Sergeant Peter George</p> <p>Private First Class William A. “Speedy” Hecht</p>	<p>Dallas-Fort Worth National Cemetery Dallas, TX</p>
<p>Mrs. Heidi Stone Syracuse Arts Academy Syracuse, UT</p>	<p>Captain Robert John Epperson</p> <p>Private First Class John Estrada</p>	<p>Utah Veterans Cemetery and Memorial Park Bluffdale, UT</p>
<p>Mrs. Julia Winslow Providence Hall Junior High School Herriman, UT</p>	<p>Captain Frank Douglas Boll, Jr.</p> <p>Sergeant Gladys Mae Topolski Breen</p>	<p>Utah Veterans Cemetery and Memorial Park Bluffdale, UT</p>
<p>Ms. Nicole Winter Cosby High School Midlothian, VA</p>	<p>Technical Sergeant Robert Kenneth Campbell, Sr.</p> <p>Technical Sergeant Edward Fisher</p>	<p>Virginia Veterans Cemetery at Amelia Amelia, VA</p>

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Mrs. Marley Hoefs St. Croix Falls High School St. Croix Falls, WI	Captain William Robert Bennewitz Corporal Harlan Theodore Rosvold	Fort Snelling National Cemetery Minneapolis, MN
Mr. Chuck Taft University School at Milwaukee Milwaukee, WI	Corporal Roman Dolata Private First Class Lloyd C. Schneider	Wood National Cemetery Milwaukee, WI

About National History Day (NHD)

NHD is a non-profit organization based in College Park, Maryland, that seeks to improve the teaching and learning of history. Established in 1974, NHD currently engages more than half a million students each year in conducting original research on historical topics of interest and supports teachers through professional development opportunities. Students present their research as a documentary, exhibit, paper, performance, or website. Projects compete first at the local and affiliate levels, where the top entries are invited to the annual National Contest at the University of Maryland at College Park. NHD is sponsored in part by the Joyful Noise Charitable Foundation, The Better Angels Society, Bezos Family Foundation, Library of Congress, Dr. Scholl Foundation, Behring Global Educational Foundation, and the National Park Service. For more information, visit nhd.org.

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